



UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

Roland Jacob Levinsky

Pioneered the first successful bone marrow transplants in children with primary immunodeficiency and became a fearless university administrator

The dreadful death of Roland Levinsky has shocked the world of paediatric oncology and genetics. He was an immunologist of international renown who performed the UK's first successful bone marrow transplant in children with primary immunodeficiency in 1979 at Great Ormond Street children's hospital. He went on to perform the UK's first successful attempts at gene therapy in children with fatal inherited diseases. He transformed the Institute of Child Health in London into a topclass research institution. Later, he did a similar makeover at Plymouth University, sending it soaring up the league tables.

Levinsky was born in South Africa to a British-born mother and Polish/Lithuanian father. His father, died when Roland was 13. Two years later his mother returned to England with her three children.

He spent his sixth form years at William Ellis School in Camden. At University College London he was inspired by the great zoologist J Z Young, to take an intercalated degree in physical anthropology.

He gained the expertise that shaped his future during a year's postgraduate training and research on autoimmune kidney disease in Philadelphia. Returning to the Institute of Child Health, he did outstanding research with Professor John Soothill on circulating immune complexes and masterminded the successful bone marrow transplants for blood cancers and severe combined immune deficiency. With Professors Christine Kinnon and Adrian Thrasher, he initiated international collaborations that discovered the genetic basis of several primary immunodeficiency diseases. Because he understood the potential unleashed by the revolutions in molecular genetics since the late 1980s, he was one of the first UK scientists to obtain funding for gene therapy clinical trials. They were successful. He established a method for prenatal diagnosis of severe combined immune deficiency.

He rose to reader in and then professor of immunology, and then dean of the Institute of Child Health. It was clinician led when he took office and was, said Professor Andrew Copp, the current dean, "missing a trick." He reorganised its structure and recruited young clinical and non-clinical researchers from a wide range of fields. This revved up the quality of the institute's research output and hence its ability to attract substantial research grants.

In 1992, two years after he was appointed, the research assessment exercise gave the institute a score of 3. At the next assessment four years later it scored 5, and later a starred 5, the highest possible. It was widely acknowledged that this was due to Levinsky's recruitment and reorganisation.

Levinsky fostered a close relationship between the institute and University College London which culminated in a merger in 1996. In 1999 he was appointed vice provost for biomedicine and head of the graduate school.

He served on the editorial board of four medical journals and lectured internationally on immunodeficiency diseases and gene therapy. He coauthored over 200 research papers, many of them of landmark importance, and several books. He served on the Royal College of Physicians' clinical immunology advisory

board, the British Paediatric Association's academic board, the Department of Health's joint committee on vaccination and immunisation, and was medical adviser on vaccines for the *British National Formulary*. He was president of the European Group for Immunodeficiency Diseases, a group member of the EC Concerted Action in Stem Cell Biology, and a founder member of the European BMT working party for immunodeficiency diseases.

In 2002 he left London and medicine to become a big fish in a smaller pond. As chief executive and vice chancellor of the University of Plymouth he moved its three colleges on to a single site in Plymouth. Moving Seale Hayne Agricultural College met with fierce opposition from a powerful farming lobby including the Prince of Wales and many of the landed aristocracy in the House of Lords, who had learnt estate management there. He received a nocturnal death threat, but magnanimously allowed the perpetrator to finish her course and graduate after she apologised and said it was a prank. Levinsky also aligned the university's research strategy with that of the regional development authority, investing in marine science and technology, biomedicine and health, and creative arts.

He did an MA in modern Russian history to rediscover the experience of being a student. He was an accomplished potter who sold his porcelain at craft galleries and crossed the Atlantic in his 13 metre yacht.

On New Year's Day he and his wife were walking their dog in blustery weather when a high voltage power cable became detached from its pylon, whipped through the air, and hit him on the head. He died instantly. He is survived by his wife, two daughters, and a son.

Caroline Richmond

Roland Jacob Levinsky, lecturer, reader, then Hugh Greenwood professor of immunology (1972-99); dean, Institute of Child Health (1990-9); vice provost and head of graduate school, University College London (1999-2002); chief executive and vice chancellor, University of Plymouth (2002) (b 16 October 1943; q University College Hospital, London, 1968; BSc, MD, FRCP), d 1 January 2007.

Pamela June Alexander (née Tyson)

Former general practitioner East Yorkshire (b 1924; q Liverpool 1947), d 25 May 2006.

Pamela June Alexander ("June") was involved in early trials of streptomycin for tuberculosis before being appointed lecturer in physiology. After marriage she moved to Yorkshire and was a single handed practitioner for 35 years, delivering her patients' babies at the local maternity unit. After compulsory retirement at 70 she worked part time, working two sessions a week up to her death. She was also a doctor for Victim Support for many years. June co-founded Riding for the Disabled. She built up the Okeden Arabian Stud and was elected president of the Arab Horse Society in her 81st year. Predeceased by her husband, Gordon, in 2004, she leaves three children and four grandchildren.

Rosemary Alexander

Peter MacDonald Crawford



Former general practitioner Ballater (b 1925; q Glasgow 1948; LVO, DOBst RCOG), d 3 December 2006.

After house jobs in Glasgow, Peter MacDonald Crawford proceeded to national service in the Royal Army Medical Corps, being stationed in Egypt. He then entered general practice in East Kilbride, starting his own practice there in 1957. In 1977 he gave up his town practice and medical politics as a member of the BMA's General Medical Services Committee for single handed practice in Ballater, Royal Deeside. Here he was later appointed apothecary to the Queen in Scotland. On his retiral in 1981 he was made an LVO. After retirement

he brought many projects to fruition in Upper Deeside and served on the community council. He leaves a wife, Margaret, and three children.

Iain Broom

Thomas Goronwy ("T G") Evans



Former consultant surgeon Singleton and Llanelli Hospitals, Swansea (b 1920; q St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, 1942; TD, FRCS), died from multiorgan failure on 25 November 2006.

Thomas Goronwy Evans ("Goronowy") left for London at the age of 16 to train at St Bartholomew's Hospital. He was sent to the Middle East and worked as an army surgeon in Palestine and Egypt during 1946-8. From 1954 to 1990 he worked as a general surgeon in Swansea, retiring completely at the age of 75. He also worked in the Royal Army Medical Corps with the Territorial Army until he retired as lieutenant colonel. Predeceased by his first wife, Joan, in 1970, he leaves a second wife, Mary; three daughters from his first marriage; and eight grandchildren.

Sue Smith

David Pratt

Former consultant general and vascular surgeon St James's University Hospital, Leeds (b 1930; q Leeds 1954; BSc (Anat), FRCS), died from acute coronary insufficiency on 23 May 2006.

After an outstanding undergraduate career culminating in a degree with first class honours and distinctions in surgery and forensic medicine, David Pratt undertook house appointments in Leeds. He did national service in the Royal Navy, serving as a surgeon lieutenant on HMS *Eagle* during the Suez Crisis. On returning to Leeds he trained

in surgery before his appointment to St James's University Hospital and Chapel Allerton Hospital. In retirement he pursued his fascination for all things French, excelling as a domestic chef and watercolour artist. He leaves a wife, Libby, and three sons.

Roger Peel

Patricia Mary Qura'n (née Gilligan)



Consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist Amman, Jordan (b 1953; q Queen's University Belfast, 1978; DRCOG, JBOG), died from complications of ovarian cancer on 4 October 2006.

At school Patricia Mary Gilligan was a star performer at the Patricia Mulholland Irish Ballet School. After her marriage to Ziad, whom she met at university, she went to Amman and quickly became fluent in Arabic, much to the surprise of many an unsuspecting motorist. She continued her training in obstetrics and gynaecology through the Jordanian army medical service, subsequently developing a successful practice in Amman. She introduced many young girls to the skills of Irish ballet. Diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 1999, she returned to her clinic as soon as possible. She leaves a husband, Ziad, and three children.

Alex Magee, Bronagh Bunting, Fiona Gibson

Julian Thomas ("Tomi") Spenser

Former general practitioner Manchester, and Sasa, Israel (b 1927; q St Andrews 1950), died from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma on 2 July 2006. Julian Thomas Spenser ("Tomi") was evacuated to England in 1939 on a Kindertransport and after



practising in the United Kingdom moved in 1966 to kibbutz Sasa, Israel. He worked for 30 years with his wife in Arab-Jewish rural clinics. His interest in the problem oriented medical record produced the record used for 80% of the country's population. Tomi helped found the department of community and family health in Haifa, and the Israeli Balint Society, and chaired the Israel Family Medicine Association. He retired in 1996 and established the programme for the study of the Holocaust and medicine in Haifa and was a hospice director and volunteer consultant. Predeceased by his wife, Sheine, he leaves four children and 15 grandchildren.

Shmuel Reis, Eva Alkon-Katz, Jim Shalom, Jonathan Spenser

Francis James ("Jim") Zacharias

Former consultant physician Clatterbridge Hospital, Wirral (b 1917; q Liverpool 1941; MD, FRCP), died from renal failure on 26 November 2006. Francis James Zacharias ("Jim") served with the Royal Air Force in the Gold Coast and RAF Halton during the later stages of the second world war, being discharged as a squadron leader. His appointment to Clatterbridge Hospital was the start of a distinguished career in the management of hypertension from its earliest days. His work on propranolol and then atenolol built the clinical database that helped to establish the use of β blockade as standard treatment. He loved sailing and the Scottish islands, and was a keen photographer and model railway enthusiast. He leaves a wife, Fran; four children; and nine grandchildren.

John Cunningham